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HHS RELEASES NEW TRIBAL CONSULTATION POLICY

HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson announced a new HHS Policy on Tribal Consultation created under a federal-tribal partnership that included over 40 Tribal and 20 Federal representatives.

“I commend the tribal and federal representatives who worked hard on the tribal consultation policy,” Secretary Thompson said. “This new agreement will further emphasize the unique government-to-government relationship between Indian Tribes and the federal government and help improve services to the Indian community through better communications.”

The new policy updates the current policy for consistency with existing Executive Memorandum dated September 23, 2004 and Executive Order 13175 and contains sections on performance, evaluation, and reporting results. These concepts were added to increase responsibility and accountability for tribal consultations. The new policy also incorporates new practices implemented since 2001 such as reactivation of the Secretary’s Intradepartmental Council on Native American Affairs (ICNAA), annual regional tribal consultations sessions, and enhanced consultation on the budget formulation process.

In March 2003, HHS initiated formal consultation with tribal governments to revise the 1997 “HHS Policy on Consultation with Indian Tribal Governments and Indian Organizations” which predated the recent Executive Memoranda and Executive Order signed to enhance tribal consultation.

Since 2001, HHS leadership expanded tribal government access to HHS programs, initiated senior staff trips to Indian reservations, reactivated a dormant ICNAA and implemented annual regional tribal consultation sessions. As part of HHS’ broadened emphasis on expanding programs to better serve this population and be responsive to tribal consultation issues, the Secretary determined revision to existing policy was needed.

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Note: All HHS press releases, fact sheets and other press materials are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/news>.